

# THE POLYNESIAN.

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J. J. JARVES, Editor.

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## COMMUNICATED.

### PASSAGE

THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MAGELLAN—  
In the Schooner *Morse of Boston*—98 tons (*Late the United States Revenue Cutter Crawford*.)

Concluded from No. 4.

At 4 P. M. we reached the entrance of "Crooked Reach." Saw St. David's Head or El Morrión, a singular looking headland on the southern shore. In the evening we succeeded in getting to an anchorage in Borsa or Island Bay. The next morning we again weighed anchor and beat up to some small islands lying a little to the westward of Cape Quod on the southern shore. Here is the narrowest part of the straits of Magellan—only one and a quarter miles broad! The weather—unpromising in the morning, had now turned into a violent snow storm, with heavy squalls of wind from the westward. The shore on both sides of the Straits although only a little more than half a mile from us, was at times completely obscured from view by the falling snow, and obliging us to run back to our last anchorage in Borsa Bay. There we remained until the following morning—when we succeeded in beating to westward as far as Swallows harbor—though the wind blew very hard—accompanied by thick squalls of snow and hail. The anchorage is under a large Island separating Swallow bay from Condesa bay. It is well sheltered from all winds—though the water is deep;—25 fathoms. The severity of the weather detained us at anchor at this place for two days—when it becoming moderate, we again set sail. Passing Glacier Bay, we had a fine view of the "Frozen mountain" which makes a singular appearance from its dark blue colour. We anchored for the night in

a small cove a little to the eastward of the Playr Parda, Great cove. The day following, the weather was pleasant, with a moderate breeze from N. W. to north. By noon we had arrived off "Half Port Bay" the wind hauled to the N. E. and blew a gentle breeze which enabled us to run out of Long Reach very speedily. The weather became very fine, and we experienced a genial warmth, to which we had for sometime been strangers. With a gradually increasing breeze we steered towards Cape Providence. The Straits are here about 8 miles wide—as evening advanced we were delighted with the sight of porpoises and finback whales giving evidence of our approach towards the waters of the Pacific. Our hearts were made joyous with the prospect of having a fair wind through the night, and our little vessel by morning be able to dance upon its blue waves. At 2 A. M. having a bright moon we saw Cape Pillar very plainly, bearing South of us and about 3 miles distance. From this position we bade adieu to the Straits of Magellan. Having occupied thirty two days in effecting the passage. Seventeen of which we had laid at anchor in different harbors in tempestuous weather—the remainder of the time had been mostly employed in beating against the westerly winds.

The difficulties and dangers to be met with in making a passage westward, through the Straits of Magellan are great. For vessels of over 150 tons burthen I should recommend the taking the chance of a passage round Cape Horn in preference to going through the Straits. The prevailing winds in the Straits are from S. W. to N. W., blowing directly through the reaches and generally with great violence. Notwithstanding the breadth of the channel is generally but about 2½ miles wide, yet both shores are frequently obscured from view; by fog in the summer, and by falling snows in winter. To these impediments to a quick passage may be added, the tempestuous weather which generally exists, the strong tides, in some places easterly currents, and the deep-water and rocky bottom of the anchorages, sufficient altogether to deter the experienced from endeavoring to contend against them while the way round the Cape is left to choice. Vessels fore and aft rigged and under the size above named, would probably be better to go through the Straits—as they would have the advantage of a smooth sea, and an opportunity to supply themselves with wood and water. To vessels of this description many of the difficulties above stated, would vanish or be easily surmounted.

We arrived at Valparaiso after a passage of 131 days from Boston—and there found vessels both men of war and merchantmen who had arrived a few days previous to us and others were daily arriving from round Cape Horn—having

passages from England, France and United States varying from 110 to 145 days! These vessels had met with great difficulty in getting round Cape Horn—a constant succession of head winds and islands of ice had caused some of them to be detained off the Cape 35 days! Judging from the weather, &c. they met with at the same time we were passing through the Straits, we came to the conclusion that we must have experienced in the Straits a much worse time than is usually met with, by vessels effecting that passage.

## ISLAND OF ASCENSION.

The following account of the Island of Ascension, was drawn up by Mr. Campbell, who visited it in the Cutter *Lambton*, from Sydney, and is the result of his observations on the island and its inhabitants, taken from the *Colonist* newspaper.

The Island of Ascension, or Bonnybay, one of the group of the Caroline Islands, in the Northern Pacific, situate between the latitudes of 6° 50' and 7° 12' north latitude, and 158° 45' and 158° 47' east of Greenwich, has been occasionally visited during the last nine years by the masters of ships engaged in the whale fishery, for the purpose of refreshment, who have been uniformly well treated by the natives. This island possesses several good harbors—the principal of which is that situate on the south east side, of easy access, called by the natives Metaleline, which is the name of the tribe inhabiting that district. It is commodious and safe, and capable of containing a considerable fleet, being protected from the sea by a chain of reefs and small islands, one of which, named Nha, is the residence of Whagii, who, though only second in authority in this tribe, is the most powerful and (though not in appearance) the most warlike chief in the whole island; his name is both dreaded and respected, while his modest and unassuming character recommends itself to the particular attention of the stranger.

The scenery around this locality is romantic and beautiful. At the head of the harbor is a remarkable rock, named Facaicau, about two hundred feet high—a twin shaped cone—whose venerable summit overtops the surrounding land, and frowns in majestic grandeur over the waters of the Metaleline, and which from its commanding situation, might easily be rendered a place of great strength, possessing as it does so many natural advantages as to render it even impregnable. Skirting its base and directly behind it is the entrance of a beautiful river of considerable magnitude, though only navigable about one mile; presenting at every turn of its winding course, scenes of so sublime and interesting a character as altogether to surpass description. Nature appears in its wildest grandeur; here and there are native settlements, surrounded by groves of the cocoa nut, bread fruit and plantain trees; the children ever and anon darting through the forest, the females in native bashfulness, timidly skulking behind the trees, or squatting on the leafy bank; the tastefully but fancifully built canoes gliding along under the shade

of the spreading branches of lofty trees of ever varying foliage, on the margin of the peaceful water, while the sound of the distant cascade falls in harmony on the ear.

The other harbor, situate on the south west side of the island, named Kittie, from the tribe of Rhonakittie, is of more difficult access, but safe enough, and protected from the sea in the same way as the first. A small island at the entrance is sometimes made the residence of a chief, of equal rank with the one already noticed. It is rather unpleasant to land here, on the main land, at low water, there being about two miles of reef to walk over, but when it is high water, the river at this place can be entered a considerable distance, and forms a beautiful sheet of fresh water; landing on the right bank of which, and ascending the hill side, the path leads along, but high above, the bed of the river, which is almost hid from the view. The scenery from this place is very imposing; on the left an extensive valley stretched along for several miles to the neighboring settlement of Rhonakittie; in front, the course of the river may be traced, winding through the country, till lost in the distant mountains, which present one interminable forest of evergreen. On the right a considerable tract of arable land, on which however, there is a good deal of timber, a village, and the residence of a chief, the third in authority in this tribe, named Naniken Labandeleur.\*

There are two or three other harbors of minor importance on the northern side of the islands, around which are scattered the different settlements of the tribes of Whannica Pietack, and Whannica Poite, these two tribes generally join in war against the two former.

The natives pay little attention to cultivation, though the soil is good, seldom clearing any part of the land for that purpose. They plant their yams, &c. wherever they can find space enough with the least trouble. The productions of the island are therefore few, consisting of cocoa nut, bread fruit, plantains, sugar cane, yams, and sweet potatoes; hogs and fowls are found in the forest, and numerous birds, particularly pigeons; the shores and rivers abounding with a variety of excellent fish, which are easily taken. The wood of which their canoes are built is solid, and well adapted for that purpose, it may be found from six to nine feet in circumference. There is a great variety in the species of indigenous timber. The inhabitants are an interesting and friendly people, of the middle stature, to which, however, there are exceptions. They are copper colored; their females, from being less exposed to a burning sun are very light, their features, animated and expressive, often resemble those of Europeans.

To be continued.

\* Can this be Labillardiere—the name of a French naturalist on board Admiral D'Entrecasteaux' ship, in the unsuccessful expedition in search of La Ferouse? It is common for the natives of the South Sea Islands to assume the names of their European visitors, and Labillardiere was just such a person as would be likely to receive such a compliment. We do not recollect whether D'Entrecasteaux was in the neighborhood of the Island of Ascension.—Ed. Col.